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ABSTRACT

The education systems that are in place throughout the world were created for a society different from the one that exists now. These outdated educational systems lead to a lack of motivation on the part of teacher and student and stifle new initiatives. Actions to improve this situation include the following: (1) revising the current amount and methods of communication between the teacher and the student, with the goal being to achieve a more active student role in the classroom; (2) building teachers' capacity and leadership qualities; (3) breaking the tradition of teaching in a straight line in order to allow creative solutions and critical thinking; (4) integrating new technologies; (5) developing partnerships with the private sector to tackle the challenges of education; and (6) integrating educational needs with teaching methods. Challenges to the education system of the future include linking education to employment, improving vocational training, increasing student support systems, developing partnerships between education and business, addressing the rural-urban divide, eliminating corruption, and committing to youth education and employment. (KC)

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Action Papers from the
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The opinions expressed in this book are those of the participants in this year's session and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the THIMUN Foundation.
Since the participants come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, we have not attempted to achieve consistency in orthography. Both American and British standard spelling has been accepted.

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ACTION PAPER

1. INTRODUCTION

We, the participants of the first Annual Session of the THIMUN Youth Assembly from the Committee of Education and Youth Employment, through our action paper propose to investigate the relationship between education and employment, as it relates to all communities. Our views represent the possible reality of the future.

A generation gap has evolved in our society over the years. In present education systems, outdated traditions and values promote age segregation, misconception of authority and miscommunication. Bridging gaps between various segments of society would catalyse hope and spark motivation. Collaborative ventures through education will thus support an expandable and accommodating value system.

Through the combined efforts of government, society and private enterprise, Tri-Sector Partnerships can be established which will strengthen our efforts to improve our lives as young people world-wide.

With adaptations of values and traditions, with cultivation of hope and motivation, and with the collaborative efforts of support systems, the education and employment of youth has promise for the future.

2. THE STATE OF EDUCATION TODAY AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT

The education systems currently in place in most schools around the world have been in place for most of the last century. They are tailored to meet different needs - often needs that exist today but in another form. At times their significance and impact in today's world is minimal, and we, the youth, as recipients of this education find ourselves lost once having graduated from the various institutions where we learn. The world we live in today requires skills, knowledge and their application that did not exist a few years ago. Hence, it is imperative that the systems of education, methods of teaching and methods of learning are adapted to meet the required standard. One of the biggest impacts of the old system of education on today's youth is that it produces graduates that are incongruous with the reality of sustainable employment. Although it

gives the same basic learning and skills and prepares the students for more than they would otherwise expect, the student enters the world somewhat disoriented and with the need to (re)learn certain skills to be deemed employable. Examples of education systems that are not in line with the needs of the present are those in former colonial nations in which the education given to the masses was designed to service the administration of the public service industry or generally to equip low level employment. This education therefore creates employees and not employment creators or creative thinkers. Upon graduation the thrust is to seek jobs and not to fully pursue the dreams and aspirations of youth.

We wish to outline several problems caused by these outdated educational systems, some of which lead to a lack of motivation on the part of the teacher and the student. The rigid structure of most curricula normally allows little deviation from the set work format where both teachers and students have very little room to take new initiatives in their work. Action that can be taken to improve this situation can be in some or all of the following:

- Revising the current amount and methods of communication between the teacher and the student, with the goal of achieving a more active student role in the classroom. Today's youth communicates and receives ideas differently compared to previous generations. Practical ways in which this can be achieved include placing an emphasis on increasing the interaction between teachers and their students.

- In some countries and cultures, the problem lies with the inability of most teachers to exercise their authority and maintain a workable level of control over their students. The focus needs to be on building their capacity and leadership qualities to contribute effectively to their classes.

- Another positive development would be to break the tradition of teaching along "one line of thought" and to undertake the responsibility of teaching with a vision that allows space for creative solutions and critical thinking.

- Efforts must be taken to integrate and use new technologies where possible and to promote the understanding of these new tools by the teachers.

- Reforming and updating education is not the responsibility of schools, teachers or the government alone. The impact of education is felt broadly across society. Educators and governments need to focus their energies on developing partnerships with the private sector to tackle the challenges of education in unison.

- It is also necessary to implement a system of checks and balances to ensure that the method of teaching and the content of the education systems are in touch with the current state of the world, its realities and its needs. This needs to be done while keeping in mind a strategic view of education and ensuring that changes implemented do not affect the sustainability of schooling in a negative manner.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF LINKING EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

In the past years many changes have been made. These changes relate to politics, economics, ecology and society at large. In our opinion, the problem of unemployment begins when a young person has to choose further education such as university. In many cases, the primary focus is placed on realistic career choices rather than creating a preferred job situation. Traditions in families are still very important. That is why at times there is a desire to excel in the same profession as previous generations. Some professions are very prestigious and because of this a lot of young people want to study in certain faculties. The majority tries to find profitable and fashionable educational establishments resulting in unbalanced clusters. That is why students who become qualified specialists in the major clusters end up unemployed. In the future it will be necessary to analyse the balance between higher educational establishments and the labour market to make progressive planning, so that the admission of students to different specialised employment sectors meets the needs of society as well as their personal goals.

Most employers do not want to employ inexperienced young people. Having a theoretical foundation in a trade does not increase the employability of young people. It must, however, be accepted that, where jobs are scarce, the chances of receiving experience before employment are limited. We feel that part of the solution to the problem can be derived from creating in partnership with employers in different trades places of employment which accept young interns. During this form of study, the student will spend time studying the theoretical aspects of his/her vocation simultaneously benefiting from directly applying that knowledge under the guidance of a qualified professional or specialist.

4. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

There is a great need to provide meaningful training to help us, as young people, to develop our talents and to develop an ability to apply our learning in practical terms. In some cases, the curricula may need adaptation, updating or further development to help foster a learning environment which develops creativity, communication and interpersonal skills. However, note must be taken of the importance of basing these new ideals on our cultural values, as this can complement a meaningful education.

There is also a need to develop a working partnership between the private sector and educational institutions, as the private sector absorbs the product of these institutions. This partnership must ensure that structures and policy are in place which promote universal primary and secondary education.

5. LACK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS

In addition to adequate education, certain elements are needed to make employment creation and the availability of sustainable employment a possibility. These elements should not be separated, but rather connected from the beginning. The provision of facilities such as access to technology and credit, counselling and mentoring, office space, and preparation for real work experiences are a necessity. These measures, we hope, can promote the realities of sustainable employment for young people. We feel that the lack of these support systems is partially due to the lack of collaboration between the three main sectors of society: the government, the private sector (business), and civil society. Our feeling is that to address this problem, partnerships must be built and gaps bridged between the various stakeholders. The partnerships must engage in a long-term consultative process with the purpose of:

1. developing policies from a combined standpoint;
2. furthering the understanding between the various efforts and initiatives;
3. developing conditions which promote youth employment;
4. mobilising resources to meet these challenges.

The government, which in its position as a governing body is responsible for the welfare of all citizens, should head this consultative process. The government must bear the responsibility for ensuring that this process is launched and continued. It should be accountable in the event that this does not take place. However, it is not necessary for the government to take the complete leadership position.

The partnership between governments, the private sector and civil society organisations is paramount as these three sectors are the largest employers in most economies and together have the biggest social impact on our lives. The tasks of these partnerships include consultation on relevant issues, designing and implementing sustainable development policies and including the views of the people in matters of government and in areas directly affecting their lives. The partnerships should be known as Tri-Sector Partnerships and must be emphasised at national, state and local government level, but also in the spheres of small communities. Tri-Sector Partnerships have existed and have been successful in some form for quite some time but we feel that now is the time for all these parties to openly accept the responsibility of addressing the problems and challenges of society from a united standpoint.

In partnership, the government, private sector and civil society can be instrumental in drawing up solutions to address the following:

5.a. Access to Resources

It seems to us that young people are very often inadequately informed about the ways to seek employment. Magazines and newspapers are formerly ways in which students have found jobs. But we live in the twenty-first century and in an information society where global sources of information, such as the World Wide Web are available. Access promotes increased possibilities. We live in a world with an abundance of known opportunities and pieces of information that have not been taken advantage of. The challenge is to increase the access to these opportunities and to build channels which best help young people organise that information. A critical eye needs to be used in looking at the needs of society, the job market and the economy in order to redirect the human capital that is a result of the education system. Again, this calls for the pro-active planning that can be engineered by the Tri-Sector Partnerships.

5.b. Rural-Urban Divide

Different challenges face the youth in their surroundings and more specifically these differences are visible in the lives of youth in rural and urban settlements. The quality and standard of education they receive is often the same, yet the use they make of it differs greatly. A need exists for the problems of both rural and urban areas to be addressed by the Tri-Sector Partnerships, in collaboration and consultation with the youth.

5.c. Corruption

Great potential exists in this world to meet the needs and challenges of our generation. The resources - financial, natural or otherwise - are there to assist in effectively solving our problems. The obstacles that hinder our sustainable development and throw a shadow over our bright futures arise from the mismanagement of these resources. We want to underline that our efforts are worth nothing if we do not make a genuine effort and take a positive stand against corruption. As youth we need to devote ourselves to the elimination of corruption in all public and private institutions as a measure to support our efforts, ideas and visions. We have proposed that our challenges be met through engaging in partnership and yet it must be clarified and highlighted that no one sector of society is immune to malpractice and the mismanagement of resources. Such behaviour is not unique to those serving in positions of government alone. Hence we appeal for transparency, honesty and accountability from our leadership and ask that swift action be taken to bring into line those stifling our efforts through corrupt practices.

We stress that our future is in jeopardy if our efforts have to co-exist with the illnesses of corruption.

6. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Our hope is that through some of the suggestions, recommendations and guidelines provided by this action paper, young people, together with policy makers in our society, may be able to play an active role in the redirection of education. We feel that education is both the foundation and the governing factor in the value and state of employment in our world. Our attention should be drawn to devising education models and practices which work, which teach sustainability and are in line with 21st century needs. Our vision is that of making the education process a living process which focuses on producing results and on students who have utility and not just grades. The power of education lies in its strength as a foundation for sustainable employment creation, social and economic equity, ecological integrity, and a culture of peace and non-violence, all of which are closely interrelated. Together, our aspiration is to be young people partaking in a system of education aimed at supporting employment creators and entrepreneurs and not only employees. In our quest for sustainable livelihoods, education and the assurance of meaningful employment are our strongest weapons against poverty.

In order to contribute to a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to youth education and employment, working together with the young people and supporting the implementation of their suggestions and ideas.

Flowing from this conviction, we strongly believe that the fulfilling of the imperative need to build the future with a priority for universal education and employment lies in the hands of all.